



The National Estuary Program was established in 1987 by amendments to the Clean Water Act to identify, restore, and protect nationally significant estuaries of the United States. Unlike traditional regulatory approaches to environmental protection, the NEP targets a broad range of issues and engages local communities in the process. The program focuses not just on improving water quality in an estuary, but on maintaining the integrity of the whole system — its chemical, physical, and biological properties, as well as its economic, recreational, and aesthetic values.

► **EPA Contact**

Mike Hill
(617) 918-1398
hill.michael@epa.gov

► **Massachusetts Bays Program Contact**

Jan Smith
(617) 626-1230
www.massbays.org



Customer Call Center
888-372-7341
www.epa.gov/region1

Massachusetts Bays



What Makes the Massachusetts Bays Special?

- Massachusetts Bay and Cape Cod Bay, collectively known as Massachusetts Bays, were selected in November 1990 as an estuary of national significance by the EPA. The Bays have a rich and diverse coastline of salt marshes, tidal flats, beaches, and estuaries that are of immense value to Massachusetts' citizens, plant life and animals.
- Estuaries provide unique habitat for marine life, including commercially important shellfish. Commercial fishing continues to be a multi-million dollar industry in the area.
- Residents and visitors enjoy swimming, boating, birdwatching, and recreational fishing.
- In the Bays area, tourists spend about \$1.5 billion annually and support over 81,000 jobs.

Why do the Massachusetts Bays Need Special Attention?

- Roughly 3.8 million people live in the Massachusetts watershed. Population is growing and the Bays are jeopardized by coastal development and in upland watersheds from excess levels of nutrients, pathogens, toxics and pressures on fragile coastal habitat.
- Massachusetts lost close to 30% of its original coastline wetlands to development. Other key habitats in the Bays region are steadily degrading due to increased pollution from stormwater runoff, municipal and industrial discharges, and other sources.

Progress/Goals for the Future

What Partnership Progress has Been Made?

- In 2002, the Massachusetts Bays Program (MBP) worked to restore 393 acres of degraded habitat, including shellfish bed restoration in the Ipswich River and Salem Sound, tidal wetlands acquisition along the Merrimack River, and to restore anadromous fish habitat in Manchester, NH, and Plymouth, Kingston and Pembroke, MA. Harborfront rehabilitation in Boston Harbor was also started.
- In 2000, partners in the MBP launched the 3 year Healthy Habitats Initiative to target the root cause of most habitat loss and degradation.

What Major Actions are Planned for 2002?

- Expand "Wetlands Health Assessment Toolbox Program" on the North Shore to train volunteers, assessing the health of wetlands with the goal of replicating the program elsewhere in New England.
- Restore tidally restricted wetlands along the coast of the Bays, conduct an inventory to assess their status and prioritize sites for future restoration efforts.
- Restore "pocket" wetlands in the Boston area that suffer from impacts of urban development, such as invasion by aggressive plant species.
- In November 2002, the MBP will host a conference on the growing threat of marine invasive species.
- Provide technical help on stormwater and habitat protection issues to municipal officials and polluted runoff outreach to the public.

(continued)

Massachusetts Bay



About the Massachusetts Bays Program:

The MBP is a partnership of citizens, communities, and government, that strives to protect and enhance the coastal health and heritage of Massachusetts and Cape Cod Bays. The Mass Bays region covers over 800 miles of coastline and serves 49 coastal communities. To achieve the MBP's vision of a balanced and healthy environment, the program:

- ▶ provides support and help for local action
- ▶ cultivates environmental education and stewardship
- ▶ develops science-based initiatives
- ▶ facilitates cooperation on local and region-wide projects and programs.

What Major Actions are Planned for 2002? (continued)

- ▶ Pursue "No Discharge Area" plan designations and develop guidelines for personal watercraft use in sensitive areas on Cape Cod. Sewage from boats and polluted runoff or erosion often due to personal watercraft threaten the Cape's coastal waters.



What is the Healthy Habitats Initiative?

- ▶ Enhance habitat protection through three year effort including land use planning by protecting critical habitat and unique community character by helping towns preserve open space, protect wetlands, prevent stormwater impacts to water quality and manage coastal resources.

- ▶ Support two target area projects: habitat preservation and innovative community planning, using the MBP's partnerships and technical expertise to implement specific solutions to local and regional habitat threats.
- ▶ Produce critical research, important local initiatives, innovative management tools and much needed outreach and education to local officials and the public about the importance of habitat.



Photo: Bill Stanton



Who are the Partners?

EPA New England • Massachusetts EOE/Office of Coastal Zone Management • Regional Planning Agencies: Merrimack Valley, Metropolitan Area and Cape Cod • Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection • U.S. Army Corps of Engineers • University of Massachusetts - Boston • MIT Sea Grant • Massachusetts Water Resources Authority • Mass Audubon - North Shore • Conservation Law Foundation • 49 coastal communities in the Massachusetts Bays area

The MBP has also relied heavily on the participation of local citizens to provide guidance and direction, to identify pressing regional issues and to bring about real change leading to protection of the Bays. To find out more about your estuarine environment and what you can do to get involved, visit www.massbays.org.



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Note: EPA-New England offers businesses and municipalities information and assistance to improve compliance with environmental laws and be better stewards of their local environment. Please call to learn how EPA can help.

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